United Nations E/CN.17/1999/8

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
14 April 1999

Original: English

Commission on Sustainable Development
Seventh session
19–30 April 1999
Item 7 of the provisional agenda*
Initiation of preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on issues related to the sectoral theme: energy

Initiation of preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on issues related to the sectoral theme: energy

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–2	2
II.	Background	3–5	2
III.	Preparatory process for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development	6–13	3
	A. Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development	7–9	3
	B. Contribution from the new Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development	10–11	3
	C. Contributions from the United Nations system and other international organizations	12	3
	D. Contributions from government-led initiatives, the private sector and major groups	13	4
IV.	Proposals for action by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session	14	4

* E/CN.17/1999/1.

99-10644 (E) 210499

I. Introduction

1. At its nineteenth special session, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (Assembly resolution S-9/2, annex). The Programme includes the multi-year programme of work for the Commission on Sustainable Development for the period 1998–2001, under which the sectoral theme of the ninth session of the Commission will be atmosphere/energy and the economic sector to be discussed will be energy/transport. Pertinent decisions of the General Assembly are contained in section III.B of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, under the heading "Energy" (paras. 42–46) as well as under the headings "Transport" and "Atmosphere" (paras. 47–56).

2. At its nineteenth special session, the General Assembly, recognizing the complexities and interdependencies inherent in addressing energy issues within the context of sustainable development, also decided that the preparations for the ninth session of the Commission should be initiated at the Commission's seventh session, and should utilize an open-ended intergovernmental group of experts on energy and sustainable development to be held in conjunction with inter-sessional meetings of the eighth (2000) and ninth (2001) sessions of the Commission. The General Assembly emphasized that in line with the objectives of Agenda 21, the ninth session of the Commission should contribute to a sustainable energy future for all.

II. Background

3. At its nineteenth special session, the General Assembly stated that while energy is essential to economic and social development and improved quality of life, sustainable patterns of production, distribution and use of energy are crucial. It concluded that there is therefore a need for:

(a) A movement towards sustainable patterns of production, distribution and use of energy;

(b) Evolving measures to strengthen international cooperation in the field of energy;

(c) Countries to promote policies and plans that take into account the economic, social and environmental aspects of the production, distribution and use of energy;

(d) Evolving commitments for the transfer of relevant technologies to developing countries and economies in transition to enable them to increase the use of renewable sources of energy; countries also need to increase the use of cleaner technologies, including fossil fuel technologies, and to improve efficiency in energy production, distribution and use;

(e) Promoting efforts in research and on the development and use of renewable energy technologies at the international and national levels; and encouraging further research, development and application, as well as transfer of cleaner and more efficient technologies, through effective international support;

(f) Encouraging Governments and the private sector to consider appropriate ways to address the issue of environmental cost internalization and the gradual elimination of subsidies, taking into account, respectively, socio-economic and environmental conditions of the countries and the specific needs and conditions of developing countries;

(g) Encouraging better coordination on the issue of energy within the United Nations system.

4. At the special session, the Assembly also concluded that current patterns of transportation, with their current patterns of energy use, are not sustainable, and on the basis of current trends may compound the environmental problems and health impacts that the world faces. There is therefore a need for:

(a) The adoption and promotion, as appropriate, of measures to mitigate the negative impact of transportation on the environment, including measures to improve efficiency in the transportation sector;

(b) The use of a broad spectrum of policy instruments to improve energy efficiency and efficiency standards in the transportation and related sectors;

(c) The promotion of integrated transport policies that consider alternative approaches to meeting commercial and private mobility needs and improve performance in the transport sector, in particular the need to encourage international cooperation in the transfer of environmentally sound technologies in the transportation sector;

(d) Accelerate the phasing-out of the use of leaded gasoline as soon as possible.

5. At its special session, the General Assembly recognized that the problem of climate change is one of the biggest challenges that will face the world in the twenty-first century, and stated that the ultimate goal, shared by all countries, was to achieve the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the

climate system. The Assembly anticipated the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and that upon entry into force of the Protocol it would result in binding emissions limitations in the countries concerned.

III. Preparatory process for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development

6. Pursuant to the decision of the special session, the Commission on Sustainable Development is expected to decide at its seventh session on the modalities for effective preparations for the discussion on energy in the context of sustainable development that is to be held at the ninth session of the Commission, in 2001. In the view of the Secretariat, such a preparatory process should involve the essential components set out below.

A. Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development

7. Two meetings of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development, to be held, as decided by the General Assembly, in 2000 and 2001, in conjunction with the inter-sessional meetings of the Commission.

8. Bearing in mind that the role of the ad hoc inter-sessional working groups of the Commission is to assist in the preparations for the session of the Commission in a given year, it is suggested that in the year 2000, since the issues of energy is not on the agenda of the eighth session of the Commission, the first meeting of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development would need to be organized in the first quarter of the year in addition to the two regular meetings of the ad hoc inter-sessional working groups, which will focus on the theme and topics of the agenda of the eighth session of the Commission in accordance with the established practice.

9. It is important to ensure that the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development, at its first session, will engage in substantive discussions of the issue of energy in the context of sustainable development, and will also consider the possible scope and format of the relevant outcomes of the ninth session of the Commission. The Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts could also recommend the agenda, timing and duration of its second session, to be held in 2001, for final preparations for the ninth session of the Commission.

B. Contribution from the new Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development

10. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1998/46, annex I.C and D, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development comprises two sub-groups of 12 experts each, one of which sub-groups will deal with energy-related issues. In that resolution, the Council also decided that the work of the Committee should take into account the multi-year work programme of the Commission, so as to ensure that its own work programme will be structured in a manner that could enable the Committee to contribute to the work of the Commission. Accordingly, the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development which held its first session from 5 to 16 April 1999 in New York just prior to the seventh session of the Commission, had its sub-group on energy prepare a contribution to the preparatory process for the ninth session of the Commission on different options for a sustainable energy future and policy measures to be implemented to achieve this, including inputs to the work of its Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development.

11. The report of the first session of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development will be submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999 for consideration and approval, as appropriate.

C. Contributions from the United Nations system and other international organizations

12. Contributions are expected to include the following:

(a) In response to the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), at its twelfth meeting in September 1998, decided to establish the Inter-Agency Task Force on Energy with a view to ensuring a collaborative contribution of all relevant organizations of the

United Nations system to the Commission process on energy and sustainable development. A preliminary report on the United Nations system-wide work plan on energy for the ninth session of the Commission was reviewed by IACSD at its thirteenth session. IACSD subsequently requested the Task Force to finalize the preparation of a system-wide work plan on energy, atmosphere and transport for the period up to 2001. The first meeting of the Task Force took place on 8 April 1999 at New York, in conjunction with the first meeting of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development. Members of the Task Force agreed that activities to be undertaken are complementary and mutually supportive, and that duplication of work, such as that undertaken by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, should be avoided. Coordination and information-sharing is a prerequisite for the system. Members agreed that the advantages and disadvantages of energy options, the impact of energy from a social, economic and environment perspective and due consideration of the role of stakeholders, including the scientific and academic communities, should be made as an integral part of the common approach. Task Force members reviewed activities currently under way and/or planned by them in preparation for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. To enhance coordination and promote synergies among these activities and better prepare for the ninth session of the Commission, it was decided to establish an electronic network. Task Force members agreed to provide updated information on work that is either ongoing or envisioned so that a matrix of United Nations activities geared towards the ninth session of the Commission could be established. The information will also be used for reports of the Secretary-General to be prepared in support of the preparatory process for the ninth session and submitted for consideration by the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development. The Task Force will meet again in September/October 1999 to follow-up on preparations for the ninth session of the Commission and to review the first draft of the world energy assessment (see below);

(b) The Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, through its Energy and Transport Branch and in close cooperation with other entities of the United Nations, Governments and major groups, will provide substantive secretariat support to the preparatory process;

(c) The Department, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Energy Council are in the process of preparing jointly a study entitled "World energy assessment". The assessment is anticipated to be a significant activity of the preparatory process and may serve as an important contribution to the ninth session of the Commission.

D. Contributions from government-led initiatives, the private sector and major groups

13. It is expected that, in accordance with the practice of the Commission, the preparatory process will benefit from various initiatives taken and activities organized by Governments and also from effective contributions from the private sector and major groups.

IV. Proposals for action by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its seventh session

14. At its seventh session, the Commission on Sustainable Development should initiate preparations for its ninth session, as called for by the General Assembly in its resolution S-19/2, and should decide on specific modalities for the preparatory process for the ninth session. Accordingly, the Commission is invited to give consideration to the following draft resolution, which could be recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999:

"Preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the issue of energy

"The Economic and Social Council,

"Recalling the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 adopted by the General Assembly at its nineteenth special session, in which the Assembly, *inter alia*, decided that preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the issue of energy should utilize an open-ended intergovernmental group of experts on energy and sustainable development to be held in conjunction with inter-sessional meetings of the eighth and ninth sessions of the Commission,

"1. *Decides* that the first session of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Group of Experts on Energy and Sustainable Development be held in New York in

the first quarter of 2000 for the duration of one working week, in conjunction with the meetings of the Commission's inter-sessional ad hoc working groups, and that this session will have the following provisional agenda:

1. Election of officers.
2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.
3. Preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the issue of energy.
4. Provisional agenda of its second session.
5. Adoption of the report of the Group of Experts on its first session.

"2. *Also decides* that at its first session, the Group of Experts will engage in substantive discussions on the issue of energy and sustainable development, taking into full account the provisions of paragraph 46 of the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21; that it will consider the possible scope and format of the relevant outcomes of the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development; and that it will also recommend to the Commission the agenda, timing and duration of its second session, to be held in 2001;

"3. *Welcomes* the contribution to the preparatory process for the ninth session of the Commission of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development on different options for a sustainable energy future and policy measures to be implemented to achieve this;

"4. *Further welcomes* the intention of the entities of the United Nations system, expressed, *inter alia*, through the Inter-Agency Task Force on Energy of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, to make an active contribution to the work of the Group of Experts;

"5. *Invites* the Secretary-General, working in close collaboration with entities of the United Nations system as well as with other relevant international organizations, to prepare analytical reports and other documentation, as appropriate, for consideration at the first session of the Group of Experts;

"6. *Calls upon* Governments, international organizations, the private sector and other major groups to actively participate and contribute to the preparatory process."